NUMB. LI.

The GUARDIAN.

———*Res antiquæ Laudis & Artis*
Ingredior, Sanctos *auſus recludere Fontes.* Virg.

Saturday, May 9. 1713.

'TIS probable the firſt Poets were found at the Altar, that they employed their Talents in adorning and animating the Worſhip of their Gods; the Spirit of Poetry and Religion reciprocally warm'd each other, Devotion inſpir'd Poetry, and Poetry exalted Devotion; the moſt Sublime Capacities were put to the moſt noble Uſe; Purity of Will, and Fineneſs of Underſtanding, were not ſuch Strangers as they have been in latter Ages, but were moſt frequently lodg'd in the ſame Breaſt, and went, as it were, Hand in Hand, to the Glory of the World's great Ruler, and the Benefit of Mankind. To reclaim our Modern Poetry, and turn it into its due and Primitive Channel, is an Endeavour altogether worthy a far greater Character than the Guardian of a private Family. Kingdoms might be the better for the Converſion of the Muſes from Senſuality to natural Religion, and Princes on their Thrones might be obliged and protected by its Power.

Were it modeſt, I ſhould profeſs my ſelf a great Admirer of Poeſie, but that Profeſſion is in Effect telling the World, that I have a Heart tender and generous, a Heart that can ſwell with the Joys, or be depreſs'd with the Misfortunes, of others, nay more, even of imaginary Perſons; a Heart large enough to receive the greateſt Ideas Nature can ſuggeſt, and delicate enough to reliſh the moſt Beautiful; it is deſiring Mankind to believe that I am capable of entering into all thoſe ſubtle Graces, and all that divine Elegance, the Enjoyment of which is to be felt only, and not expreſs'd.

All kinds of Poeſie are amiable, but ſacred Poeſie ſhould be our moſt eſpecial Delight; Other Poetry leads us thro' flowery Meadows or beautiful Gardens, refreſhes us with cooling Breezes or delicious Fruits, ſooths us with the Murmur of Waters or the Melody of Birds; or elſe conveys us to the Court or Camp, dazles our Imagination with Crowns and Scepters, embattel'd Hoſts, or Heroes ſhining in burniſh'd Steel; but ſacred Numbers ſeem to admit us into a ſolemn and magnificent Temple, they encircle us with every thing that is Holy and Divine, they ſuperadd an agreeable Awe and Reverence to all thoſe pleaſing Emotions we feel from other Lays; an Awe and Reverence that exalts, while it chaſtiſes; Its ſweet Authority reſtrains each undue Liberty of Thought, Word and Action; it makes us think better, and more nobly of our ſelves, from a Conſciouſneſs of the great Preſence we are in, where Saints ſurround us, and Angels are our Fellow-Worſhippers.

O let me glory, glory in my Choice!
Whom ſhould I ſing, but Him who gave me Voice?
This Theme ſhall laſt, when Homer'*s ſhall decay,*
When Arts, Arms, Kings and Kingdoms melt away.
And can it, Pow'rs immortal, can it be,
That this high Province was reſerv'd for me?
Whate'er the new, the raſh Adventure coſt,
In wide Eternity I dare be loſt,
I dare launch out, and ſhew the Muſes more,
Than e'er the Learned Siſters ſaw before;
In narrow Limits they were wont to ſing,
To teach the Swain, or celebrate the King.
I graſp the whole, no more to Parts confin'd,
I lift my Voice, and ſing to Human-kind;
I ſing to Men and Angels, Angels join
(While ſuch the Theme) their ſacred Hymns with mine.

But beſide the greater Pleaſure which we receive from Sacred Poeſie, it has another vaſt Advantage above all others; when it has placed us in that imaginary Temple (of which I juſt now ſpoke) methinks the mighty Genius of the Place covers us with an inviſible Hand, ſecures us in the Enjoyments we poſſeſs. We find a kind of Refuge in our Pleaſure, and our Diverſion becomes our Safety. Why then ſhould not every Heart that is addicted to the Muſes, cry out in the Holy Warmth of the beſt Poet that ever lived, *I will magnifie thee, O Lord, my King, and I will praiſe thy Name for ever and ever.*

That greater Benefit may be reaped from Sacred Poeſie than from any other, is indiſputable; but is it capable of yielding ſuch exquiſite Delight? Has it a Title only to the Regard of the Serious and the Aged? Is it only to be read on *Sundays*, and to be bound in Black? Or does it put in for the good Eſteem of the Gay, the Fortunate, the Young? Can it Rival a Ball or a Theatre, or give Pleaſure to thoſe who are converſant with Beauty, and have their Palates ſet high with all the Delicacies and Poinancy of human Wit?

That Poetry gives us the greateſt Pleaſure which affects us moſt, and *that* affects us moſt, which is on a Subject in which we have the deepeſt Concern; for

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for this Reaſon it is a Rule in Epick Poetry, that the Tale ſhould be taken from the Hiſtory of that Country to which it is written, or at fartheſt from their diſtant Anceſtors. Thus *Homer* ſung *Achilles* to the Deſcendants of *Achilles*, and *Virgil* to *Auguſtus*, that Hero's Voyage,

—Genus unde Latinum
Albanique Patres, atque altæ Mœnia Romæ.

Had they changed Subjects, they had certainly been worſe Poets at *Greece* and *Rome*, whatever they had been eſteemed by the reſt of Mankind; and in what Subjects have we the greateſt Concern, but in thoſe at the very Thought of which *This World grows leſs and leſs, and all its Glories fade away?*

All other Poeſie muſt be dropt at the Gate of Death, this alone can enter with us into Immortality; it will admit of an *Improvement* only, not (ſtrictly ſpeaking) an entire *Alteration* from the Converſe of Cherubim and Seraphim: It ſhall not be forgotten, when the Sun and Moon are remembered no more; it ſhall never dye, but (if I may ſo expreſs my ſelf) be the meaſure of Eternity, and the laudable Ambition of Heaven.

How then can any other Poeſie come in competition with it?

Whatever Great or Dreadful has been done,
Within the View of Conſcious Stars or Sun,
Is far beneath my Daring: I look down
On all the Splendors of the Britiſh *Crown;*
This Globe is for my Verſe a narrow Bound:
Attend me, all ye Glorious Worlds around:
Oh all ye Spirits, howſoe'er disjoyn'd,
Of every various Order, Place and Kind,
Hear and aſſiſt a feeble Mortal's Lays,
'Tis your Eternal King I ſtrive to Praiſe.

Theſe Verſes, and thoſe quoted above, are taken out of a Manuſcript Poem on the Laſt Day, which will ſhortly appear in Publick.

To the GUARDIAN.

SIR,

WHEN you ſpeak of the Good which would ariſe from the Labours of Ingenious Men, if they could be prevailed upon to turn their Thoughts upon the Sublime Subjects of Religion, it ſhould, methinks, be an Attractive to them, if you would pleaſe to lay before them, that Noble Ideas aggrandiſe the Soul of him who writes with a true Taſte of Virtue. I was juſt now reading *David*'s Lamentation over *Saul* and *Jonathan*, and that Divine Piece was peculiarly pleaſing to me, in that there was ſuch an exquiſite Sorrow expreſſed in it, without the leaſt Alluſion to the Difficulties from whence *David* was extricated by the Fall of thoſe great Men in his way to Empire. When he receives the Tidings of *Saul*'s Death, his generous Mind has in it no Reflection upon the Merit of the unhappy Man who was taken out of his way, but what raiſes his Sorrow, inſtead of giving him Conſolation.

The beauty of Iſrael is ſlain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!

Tell it not in Gath, publiſh it not in the ſtreets of Aſkelon: leſt the daughters of the Philiſtines rejoice, leſt the daughters of the uncircumciſed triumph.

Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the ſhield of the mighty is vilely caſt away, the ſhield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oyl.

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleaſant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were ſwifter than eagles, they were ſtronger than lions.

Ye daughters of Iſrael, weep over Saul, who clothed you in ſcarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

‘How beautifully is the more amiable and noble Parts of *Saul*'s Character, repreſented by a Man whom that very *Saul* purſued to Death! But when he comes to mention *Jonathan*, the Sublimity ceaſes, and not able to mention his generous Friendſhip, and the moſt noble Inſtances ever given by Man, he ſinks into a Fondneſs that will not admit of high Language or Alluſions to the greater Circumſtances of their Life, and turns only upon their familiar Converſe.

I am diſtreſſed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleaſant haſt thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, paſſing the love of women.

‘In the Mind of this admirable Man, Grandeur, Majeſty and Worldly Power were deſpicable Conſiderations, when he caſt his Eye upon the Merit of him who was ſo ſuddenly ſnatched from them; and when he began to think of the great Friendſhip of *Jonathan*, his Panegyrick is uttered only in broken Exclamations, and tender Expreſſions of how much they both loved, not how much *Jonathan* deſerved.

‘Pray pardon this, which was to hint only that the Virtue, not the Elegance, of fine Writing, is the thing principally to be conſidered by a *Guardian*.

I am, SIR,

Your humble Servant,

C. F.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

This Day is Publiſh'd, New and Correct Editions of the following Books, viz.

Dryden's Fables in one Volume, 8vo. *Dryden's Juvenal and Milton's Paradiſe Regained, both in* 12mo. *Printed in Pocket Volumes, with an Elzevir Letter, and adorned with Cuts deſigned and engraved by the beſt Hands. Sold by Jacob Tonſon at Shakeſpear's Head over-againſt Catherine-ſtreet in the Strand.*

This Day is Publiſhed, the Fourth Edition of CATO, *a Tragedy. As it is acted at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane, By Her Majeſty's Servants. Written by Mr. Addiſon. N. B. There are a ſmall Number Printed on a Fine Paper. Alſo Juſt Publiſh'd the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Volumes of the Spectators in* 8vo *and* 12mo. *Printed for Jacob Tonſon at Shakeſpear's Head over-againſt Catherine-ſtreet in the Strand.*

On Thurſday next, being the 14th Inſtant, at the three Chairs, the Corner of the Little Piazza in Covent-Garden, will be expoſed to Sale, a curious Collection of Original Pictures by the moſt celebrated Maſters. The Sale to begin preciſely at 11 a-Clock, and the Pictures to be viewed on Tueſday and Wedneſday next before the Sale. Catalogues to be had of Mr. Cooper, at the Three Pidgeons in Half-moon-ſtreet in the Strand, and at the Place of Sale. N. B. The Curious and Encouragers of Art are deſired to take Notice, that theſe Pictures are diſpoſed of, only becauſe the Gentleman's leaving off Houſe-keeping, and that no indirect Practice will be uſed in the Sale.

Notice is given to the Publick, that for the more general Diſperſing of the Reconciler, the Price is brought down to three Half-pence. In the Courſe of the preſent Papers upon the Revolution, there will be an altogether new Explication propoſed of the famous Paſſage of the 13th of the Romans, ſhewing the Senſe of it to have been overlook by all Interpreters. As alſo an Inquiry into the Validity in Point of Juſtice of Renunciations and Limitations in Hereditary Monarchies. To be had of J. Morphew in Stationer's Court, and J. Browne without Temple-Bar.

LONDON: Printed for *J. Tonſon* in the *Strand*; and Sold by *A. Baldwin* in *Warwick-Lane*; where Advertiſements are taken in. 1713.